

Where's Hang Tuah's grave?

DEBATE: Manuscript by Tun Kolah claims warrior laid to rest in Palembang

ROSHIDI ABU SAMAH
MALACCA
roshidi@nst.com.my

A SPECIAL forum here yesterday to affirm the existence of Hang Tuah has instead raised another interesting and hotly debated historical fact — the exact location of the Malay warrior's grave.

Participant Abu Huzaifah Hashim said Hang Tuah's resting place was in Palembang, Indonesia, based on the *Hikayat Hang Tuah* manuscript by Tun Kolah, who was Hang Tuah's cousin.

A panellist, Malaysian Institute of Historical and Patriotism Studies (Iksep) chairman Adjunct Professor Datuk Dr Mohd Jamil Mukmin, however, insisted that the grave was in Tanjung Kling near here according to information from a version of *Sejarah Melayu* (The Malay Annals) book by William Girdlestone Shellabear.

"The *Sejarah Melayu* book clearly stated that Hang Tuah died and was



A delegate speaking during a question and answer with panellists at a forum on the existence of Hang Tuah, organised by the Malaysian Institute of Historical and Patriotism Studies, in Malacca yesterday. Pic by Khairunisah Lokman

buried in Tanjung Kling with full honours," he said at the forum.

Mohd Jamil said the polemic about the existence of Hang Tuah was not something new and had emerged since the 1950s.

"Nevertheless, 90 per cent of scholars and historians have agreed that Hang Tuah did exist and is not a myth," he said, adding that Hang Tuah's name was also etched in the books written and published by historians from Indonesia, Japan, the Netherlands, Britain and Spain

which was proof of his existence.

Another panellist, state Malaysian History Association secretary Jamil Jaamat, said Hang Tuah existed because the latter's family genealogy could be seen and studied to this day.

"Hang Tuah is not like Robin Hood, whose character was created and no one knows his origin," he said in reference to the heroic outlaw in English folklore.

Jamil also criticised Universiti Malaya's Professor Dr Ahmat Adam

for stating that Hang Tuah did not exist and was only a fictional character in the classic texts of *Sejarah Melayu* and *Hikayat Hang Tuah*.

"As a seasoned academician, he should make an in-depth study first before making such statements," he said.

Senior lecturer at Universiti Putra Malaysia's (UPM) Malay Language Department, Modern Language and Communications Faculty, Dr Rohaidah Kamaruddin, said the discovery of letters sent by Hang Tuah to

the emperor of the Ryukyu Kingdom between 1480 and 1481 was evidence that the Malay warrior existed.

"A kris with nine curves, which was discovered at the Enkakuj Shuriji temple, was evidence of the good relations between the Malacca Sultanate and Ryukyu Kingdom at that time," she said.

UPM professor of Malay Linguistics Professor Emeritus Dr Hashim Musa said a personal note in *The Commentaries of the Great Afonso de Albuquerque* was another hard evidence that Hang Tuah existed.

"The note by the Portuguese conqueror mentioned that when Malacca was invaded in 1511, Hang Tuah was living in Singapore (Temasek) and was 80 years old at the time," he said.

Meanwhile, Malacca state assembly Speaker Datuk Othman Muhammad, who opened the forum, said confusion over certain matters, such as the exact location of his grave, did not mean the existence of Hang Tuah could easily be denied.

He recalled that during the "Hang Tuah Wira Alam Melayu" seminar held here in May 2006, all eight panellists from Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore and Indonesia agreed that Hang Tuah existed.

"I urged researchers and history enthusiasts to agree on the issue of Hang Tuah so his existence is no longer disputed," he said.